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Note on French-Canadian Folk-songs

one of the best known folk-songs of Quebec, having been recorded in no less than twelve versions. All of these songs have old-country analogues. *White as the Snow* and *The King of Spain's Daughter* have an especially wide diffusion in France. *The Dumb Shepherdess* is probably the oldest of the group; it is not unlikely that the French text, as recorded in Canada, goes back to the fifteenth century. *The Prince of Orange*, of course of much later date, is one of a category of well known French songs that mock the House of Orange.

In the English versions, of which these are a selection, I have adhered as closely to the original rhythms and stanzaic structure as the prosodic differences of the two languages would permit. Pedantic literalness was not always possible, yet there are no serious deviations, least of all from the spirit of the songs as I have conceived it. Not all the originals, it may be noted, make use of strict rhymes; assonances are often used instead. In *The Dumb Shepherdess* I preferred to do without rhyme, aside from the very end of the poem, so fearful was I of spoiling its peculiar charm.

Edward Sapir

REVIEWS

A BOOK FOR LITERARY PHILOSOPHERS

Quia Pauper Amavi, by Ezra Pound. The Egoist, London.

There is no modern poet more difficult to criticize justly than Ezra Pound. Those who have suffered from his sharp

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wit and idiosyncrasies are prejudiced against him; those who have enjoyed the privilege of a real intimacy with him, who know his genuine goodness and profound love of literature, are more than prejudiced in his favor; those who do not know him at all are over-willing to listen to his enemies, to whom, unhappily, he has given only too many opportunities for calumny. He is like a man who goes hunting hedgehogs with bare feet—and finds his prey all prickles; to vary and mix the metaphor, he sits on his little hill in Kensington as if it were Olympus, casting forth winged words which, like boomerangs, are returned unto him an hundred-fold! In the mêlée his work is disloyally attacked, his least errors are exposed with a malignant triumph; his sensitiveness, which hides under a cover of bluster, is denounced as conceit; his fineness of perception is misunderstood as triviality. His scholarship, with its rather overwhelming pretention, is suspect; his polemics verge on hysteria. His fault is that he is an anachronism. With the enthusiasm of a Renaissance scholar, one of those whose fine devotion but faulty learning revealed to the fifteenth-century world the civilization of Greece, he lives in an age which looks at literature as a hobby, a freak, a branch of education; but never as a life study, a burning passion. His profound error is to love literature above everything in an age of commerce; to prize his art beyond reputation, friends, money, tranquillity. It is hard to be uncompromising even if one is right; it is doubly hard when one is frequently wrong.

Ezra Pound's poetry is American in that it is versatile,

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superficial, generous. It is European in that it is literary, subtle, full of delicate nuances, elliptic. It is more French than English. It is almost a new genre, the poetry of esthetic nuance. His *flair* for good literature is incredibly keen, considering his philological deficiencies. From his multitudinous and brief admirations he has evolved a poetry of his own, derived in every case from some earlier writer, but so altered, so stamped with his own personality, that he has made it something new. He fails most when he tries to be modern in subject as well as in manner; he is happiest when interpreting his own emotions in the mask of a dead poet.

Quia Pauper Amavi is a book for literary philosophers, for those who appreciate the odor of the past carefully enclosed in new hybrid flowers, for those who are not repelled by involved and unnecessarily crabbed diction, and who will look for what is good in a book, not for what is bad.

Langue d'Oc, the first section, is Provençal, gives us the feeling that no other interpreter has ever given, that what was written in Provence was *poetry*. *Descant on a Theme by Cerclamon* has some fine lines, particularly those beginning "Good is it to me if she flout" down to "The man whom love had and has ever."

Three Cantos, the third section, which POETRY printed in 1917, is perhaps the most important work in the book, an essay in the manner of *Sordello*. The writing is so elliptic, the thought so carefully hidden, that I cannot imagine what the poem is about, but it has delightful lines:

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Ghosts move about me patched with histories.
See the small cobbles flare with poppy spoil.
Home to sweet rest, and to the waves' deep laughter.

Spirits

Not dark and shadow-wet ghosts, but ancient living,
Wood-white, smooth as the inner bark, and firm of aspect
. clothed like the poppies, wearing golden greaves,
Light in the air.

Silk tatters still in the frame, Gonzaga's splendor,
Where do we come upon the ancient people?

The goddess

Light in the foam, breathed on by Zephyrs
And air-tending hours, mirthful, with golden
Girdles and breast-bands, thou with dark eyelids
Bearing the golden bough of Argicida.

Any of those lines would give another man an enviable reputation; because the writer is Ezra Pound they are wilfully ignored. Longer passages of *Three Cantos* which I find beautiful are the description of Sirmio (*Canto I*), the lines on Catullus, those on Camoens and the Japanese women (*Canto II*), the paraphrase of the Renaissance Homer (*Canto III*), a subject which is thrilling to the lover of old literature.

I shall leave *Propertius* alone, not because I do not like it but because I want several pages to talk about it. The reader must look upon it not as a translation, but as an inspired paraphrase, a mistranslation of genius, where lines and paragraphs of extraordinary beauty are embedded in others of doubtful value. R. A.